



THE ICG NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

What is costuming to you? There's a long standing discussion in our community as to whether what we do is an art form or a hobby.

Hobbies are practiced for interest and enjoyment, rather than for financial reward. Examples include collecting, creative and artistic pursuits, making, tinkering, sports and adult education. Engaging in a hobby can lead to acquiring substantial skill, knowledge, and experience. However, personal fulfillment is the aim.

I know some costumers who firmly regard what they do as simply a hobby; it's certainly easier to explain to the general public – everyone understands having a hobby. Some even understand spending too much time and money in pursuit of your hobby – know any golfers or collectors? They spend as much time and money as we do, sometimes more.

A hobby is fun, entertaining, something you can (theoretically) stop at any time you want to and move on to other pursuits, returning to the hobby when you've finished some other project or happen to have some spare time. It's something you can share with others who have the same interest, and swap stories and skills.

But as you spend more time on costuming, does the feeling change? Not that it isn't still fun and you certainly still enjoy the time you spend designing, creating and displaying your creations; but is it less of an option for your time and more of a necessity? A well-made, good-looking costume is no longer enough, you want to make more of an impression.

Art is a (product of) human activity, made with the intention of stimulating the human senses as well as the human mind and/or spirit; thus art is an action, an object, or a collection of actions and objects created with the intention of transmitting emotions and/or ideas.

I know an equal number of costumers who are clear that what they do is art. It's not just that they want to create costumes and maybe present them onstage – they have to. It's less of a choice than a compulsion.

Inspiration can strike at any time; in the shower, while driving, in the middle of the night. Sometimes you can't fall asleep because you're planning the next step in your head. If you go too long between projects because life gets in the way you start to feel restless, unhappy because you don't have the time to create.

So which are you – hobbyist, artist or craftsman? No definition is better or more important; it's all in the way you look at this thing we do – Costuming.



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Upcoming Newsletter

Deadlines:

September 1st
 November 1st
 January 1st

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 and Bruce Mai
 Parliamentarian: Pierre Pettinger, Jr.
 V.P., Maryland: D. Jeannette Holloman

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Chair: Denisen Hartlove (SiW)
 Member: Nora Mai (SLCG)
 Member: Dora Buck (Sick Pups)
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ICG Web Site: www.costume.org

Membership Report as of May 11, 2007

Chapter Name	Chapter Members	Last Updated
Armed Costumers Guild	29	July 2007
Beyond Reality	39	July 2007
Chicagoland	10	February 2007
CG Western Penn	10	March 2007
Dallas/Fort Worth	15	July 2007
Fiber Fantasy Artists	0	February 2007
Greater Columbia	21	July 2007
Greater Delaware Valley	7	June 2007
Middle Tennessee	11	May 2007
New Jersey/New York	27	July 2007
Northern Lights	35	July 2007
SiliconWeb	53	July 2007
Southeastern	12	July 2007
Southwest	20	July 2007
St. Louis	41	July 2007
Utah	11	July 2007
TOTAL	323	

ICG Membership Benefits

Your ICG membership benefits include voting rights and a subscription to this newsletter. Chapters that fail to report their members and submit their dues run the risk of being deactivated. Members of deactivated Chapters who wish to participate in activities as ICG members must join an active Chapter of the ICG.

ICG Email Mailing Lists

ICG-D@yahoogroups.com (General Discussion)
ICG-BOD@yahoogroups.com (Board & Officers)

ICG-D is open to everyone, including non-members. Instructions for subscribing to any of the ICG email mailing lists can be found at this URL:

help.yahoo.com/help/us/groups/groups-19.html

Publication Specifications/Advertising

Deadline to receive materials or advertising for print: The 1st of the month prior to publication. Further, updated information will be included in the next issue. Please get us your submissions and advertisements for the next issue by no later than September 1, 2007.

Electronic Submissions

Electronic submissions must be at least 300 dpi resolution. Material may be formatted as follows: text, RTF, MS Word or Corel WordPerfect. Sorry, we can't accept .txt format. Graphics at 300 dpi resolution in GIF, JPG or TIF. Email to icg-newsletter@costume.org. Please contact us first before sending attachments in email - we're sensitive to viruses!

Hard Copy Submissions (if absolutely necessary)

Send by snail mail to *The ICG Newsletter* address listed on page three of this issue. We reserve the right to retain all hard copy unless accompanied by a SASE.

Advertising Rates

Ad rates for The ICG Newsletter are per issue. Please make payment to The ICG, Inc. and send with advertising copy to *The ICG Newsletter* (email address above). Ads received without payment will not be published. Advertising revenues are used to defray the cost of mailing the newsletter. Additional proceeds benefit the International Costumers' Guild, Inc.

Ad Size	Member Rates	Non-Member Rates
Full Page	\$60	\$120
Half-Page	\$30	\$60
Quarter Page	\$15	\$30
Eighth Page (Business Card)	\$7.50	\$15
Classified Ads	Free	50 cents/word

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Running a Small Masquerade (Part 1)

by Kevin Roche, Chair, Costume-Con 26

*Fashion is the science of appearances, and it inspires one with the desire to seem rather than to be.
Edwin Hubbell Chapin (frequently misattributed to Michel de Montaigne)*

Organizing a small costume competition comes with a unique set of challenges, not the least of which may be limited resources and space. In this article I'll describe some of the approaches we have found that help to make the event fun for the contestants, enjoyable for the audience and judges, and less stressful for you and your staff.

The approach can be summarized this way:

1. Start with the ICG Fairness Guidelines.
2. Adapt the Guidelines to create rules appropriate to your venue or event.
3. Publish your rules, schedule and forms early.
4. Build a good judging panel.
5. Make yourself accessible in advance to answer questions.
6. Have a mandatory contestant meeting.
7. Plan the entire show.
8. Keep the stage tech simple.
9. Have some extra music available.
10. Take advantage of technology: have a computer and printer on hand and use them!
11. Take good care of the contestants.
12. Start on time, finish on time, have a good time.

Start with the ICG Fairness Guidelines

"There is no such thing as a small masquerade, only small-minded masquerade directors..."

Andrew Trembley, CC21 F&SF Masquerade Director

Admittedly, as one of the authors I may be biased, but I believe the recently revised ICG Guidelines for Fairness in Costume Competition (available at www.costume.org) are the first place to start when planning a masquerade or costume competition of any kind. They are the distillation of an enormous amount of experience on the part of a sizable pool of costumers and competition directors. If you walk away with nothing else, try to remember these two points:

- 1) The division system is designed to give less experienced costumers a safe place to compete, away from more experienced contestants; it is NOT a series of ranks that one must earn; and
 - 2) It is okay if there are personal issues between a particular judge and contestant, as long as measures are taken to ensure that those issues do not interfere with fair judging.
- Adapt the ICG Fairness Guidelines as needed to create rules appropriate to your venue and event

"...secondly, you must be a pirate for the Pirate's Code to apply, and you're not. And thirdly, the Code is more what you'd call 'guidelines' than actual rules. Welcome aboard the Black Pearl, Miss Turner."

Captain Barbosa, Pirates of the Caribbean: The Black Pearl (2003)

Start with the guidelines, and use them to build a set of rules that fit your contest. Keep the rules simple, and make sure they cover:

1. Who is eligible to enter and who is ineligible to enter.
2. Any theme restrictions you may have.
3. How your divisions/categories are set up.
4. Your decency rules.
5. Your "don't make a mess" and prop-handling rules.
6. Your safety rules.
7. Your time limit rules.
8. Other requirements (contestant meeting, for instance).
9. The Masquerade Director is Ghod rule.

Note – you may not need 3 divisions; a beginner and an advanced division may be sufficient. If you start with three divisions, reserve the right to collapse two of them together. I recommend always having a separate Young Fan division for costumes built *by* the YFs.

If your event has a membership (badge) requirement, encourage the registrars to put numbers on the badges; that way you can record the badge numbers of contestants.

If you have a limited theme (for instance, some anime contests don't want to see Star Wars or Harry Potter costumes on stage) be sure to specify that!

If your event encourages skits or performance-art entries, set your time limits appropriately – but remember that more than two minutes of bad amateur theatricals may drive your audience out of the house!

Publish Your Rules, Schedule and Forms Early

"Badges? We ain't got no badges. We don't need no badges. I don't have to show you any stinking badges!"

--Gold Hat, "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (1948)

If your event has a website, put the rules, schedules and forms on it. If it doesn't, but has a YahooGroup, put a copy in the Files section. If it has a LiveJournal, find a place to store a copy on the web and link to it in an entry. I recommend writing

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up your rules and forms and then creating an Adobe Acrobat (PDF) file that can be stored, emailed, and downloaded intact. If you know how to make it a fillable form, so that contestants can fill in the blanks and print the completed form, go for it. Make it a complete package, with introduction, rules, hints and forms. Including your judges' instructions will let contestants see exactly what you've told judges to look for.

You can in the future see samples of rules and forms that Andy Trembley and I have written for Anime Los Angeles, Baycon 2007, and Westercon60 when we post them on a website, the url for which will be listed in part two of this article, coming soon. Among the points to make clear is that if cheating is discovered, awards can and will be revoked.

Build a Good Judging Panel

"Numerical judging systems only get between the judges. No purpose other than to separate the judges from their expert opinions and experience"

Andrew Trembley, Anime Los Angeles 2005 Masquerade Director

A good judging panel will have a mixture of experience and interests. For small masquerades, Andy and I generally prefer about five judges: three for onstage (presentation) judging and two for workmanship. We also like to have one member of each group be a new judge – someone whose costuming has impressed us, but who has not judged before. This gives the advantage of their fresh viewpoint, and also serves to expand the pool of experienced judges for future masquerades. The goal is to achieve a panel in which the different judges' biases balance out to yield fair consideration for all entries.

If you are required to include one or more of a convention's guests of honor as judges, find time to discuss with them in advance their feelings about judging. Some guests take it quite seriously and are excellent judges; others do it because it's expected of them, but worry about hurting fans' feelings. In the latter case, *add* them to your judging panel, but simply to ask them to come up with a Judge's Choice award for the costume that most appealed to them, for any reason. Have the remainder of the panel be prepared to do the rest of the judging.

The other critical member of your judging panel is the judges' clerk. It is that person's job to shuffle paperwork, record awards, and keep the judging panel focused and on track to complete deliberations in a timely fashion. During the show, they can act as timekeeper if there is a time limit, and the you as Masquerade Director can inform them in advance of any special considerations arranged for particular entries. If the judges have a question requiring a ruling from the Director, the clerk can come get you while the judges keep deliberating.

"Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good blaster at your side, kid."

Han Solo (as played by Harrison Ford), Star Wars, 1977

On the subject of judging, I recommend against any sort of numerical scoring system. You've picked your judges for their expert opinions; let them exercise them! I like the system Adrian Butterfield taught me:

- * Sort the entries into "Yes," "No," and "Maybe" piles.
- * See if Best in Show and Best of Division winners are easily agreed upon.
- * Come up with the award names for the rest of the Yes pile.
- * Go through the Maybe pile and see which of those get awards, and name them.
- * Announce results.

Make Yourself Accessible in Advance to Answer Questions

"Make sure everybody knows what the hell is happening, preferably in advance."

Dana MacDermott, Multiple Worldcon Masquerade Winner

- * Have a dedicated email address for questions.
 - * Start a Frequently Asked Questions list. When good questions come in, add them and their answers to your published information. Web sites and LiveJournal communities are very good for this. If your event has web forums, be sure to join them and answer questions there as well.
 - * Join Cosplay.com and watch the forums there for questions about your contest.
 - * If someone writes you via postal mail, be sure to reply!
- The more places you watch for questions and the more promptly you respond, the easier life will be when your actual show rolls around.

Have a Mandatory Contestant Meeting

"I have heard with admiring submission the experience of the lady who declared that the sense of being perfectly well dressed gives a feeling of inward tranquility which religion is powerless to bestow."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

At a small event, you probably will not be able to have a tech rehearsal. But see if you can get an hour for a meeting in the
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